

Bowser (character)

Bowser (クッパ *Kuppa*, "Koopa"),^[1] or **King Koopa**, is a fictional character and the main antagonist of Nintendo's *Mario* franchise. In Japan, the character bears the title of Daimaō (大魔王 *Great Demon King*).^[2] In the U.S., the character was first referred to as "Bowser, King of the Koopas" and "The sorcerer king" in the instruction manual.^[3] Bowser is the leader of the turtle-like Koopa race, and has been the archenemy of Mario since his first appearance, in the 1985 video game *Super Mario Bros.*

His ultimate goals are to kidnap Princess Peach, defeat Mario, and conquer the Mushroom Kingdom. Since his debut, he has appeared in almost every *Mario* franchise game, usually serving as the main antagonist. Bowser is voiced by Kenny James. In addition to his usual animated and video game appearances, he also appears in the 1993 live-action film where he is portrayed byDennis Hopper.

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Concept and creation

Bowser was created by Nintendo designer and producer Shigeru Miyamoto. Miyamoto had first envisioned Bowser as an ox, basing him on the Ox King from the Toei Animation film *Alakazam the Great*.^[4] However, Nintendo designer Takashi Tezuka pointed out that the character looked a lot more like a turtle than an ox. Miyamoto and Tezuka then began to work together to define Bowser's appearance. Since the character was the leader of the turtle-like Koopa Troopas the two began to base his new appearance on them, creating a new illustration. In his final design, Miyamoto commented that he could make Bowser "look cool now"^[5]

Miyamoto named him 大魔王 クッパ *Daimaō Kuppa*. *Kuppa* came from the Japanese name for 국밥 *gukbap*, a Korean dish. Miyamoto had also considered the names ユッケ *Yukke* and 비빔밥 *Bibinba*, also Japanese names of Korean dishes

Bowser	
Mario character	
<div></div>	
Bowser as represented in promotional artwork for <i>New Super Mario Bros. U Deluxe</i> .	
First appearance	<i>Super Mario Bros.</i> (1985)
Created by	Shigeru Miyamoto
Designed by	Shigeru Miyamoto Yōichi Kotabe
Portrayed by	Christopher Collins/Patrick Pinney (<i>King Koopa's Kool Kartoons</i>) Dennis Hopper (<i>Super Mario Bros.</i>)
Voiced by	English Japanese
Information	
Full name	King Bowser Koopa I
Alias	Lord Bowser, King Bowser, Master Bowser, King Koopa
Species	Koopa
Title	King of The Koopas
Children	Bowser Jr.
Origin	Bowser's Kingdom

(육회 *yukhoe* and 비빔밥 *bibimbap* respectively).^[6] The Korean name for the character Bowser/Kuppa is not *Gukbap*, but 쿠파 *Kupa*, which is essentially a phonetic round-trip translation.^[7] The name was anglicized Kuppa rather than Koopa in the Japanese versions up until the release of *Super Mario World*.^{[8][9]}

In the *Super Mario Bros.* film, Bowser is portrayed by Dennis Hopper and is called President Koopa. He is also briefly referred to as King Koopa. This incarnation is almost entirely human in appearance, with blonde hair he gels in the shape of a crown, and he frequently wears a black business suit and tie. However, after brief exposure to his own evolution-reversing device by the Mario Bros., he starts occasionally possessing some reptilian traits. The climax of the film sees Koopa devolve into an enormous green *Tyrannosaurus rex* to battle the Mario Bros., but he is further devolved into primordial ooze.^[10]

Characteristics

Bowser is portrayed as the "King of the Koopas", anthropomorphic turtles that inhabit the world of the Mushroom Kingdom Bowser differs greatly from the rest of the Koopa clan, which consists mainly of bipedal tortoises. He is characterized by a large, spiked turtle shell, horns, a draconic muzzle, razor-sharp fangs, taloned fingers, three clawed toes on each foot, red eyes and a shock of red hair

He is physically endowed with immense strength, is nearly indestructible, and can breathe fire. He can also jump surprisingly high for his large size, although his speed and agility are most of the time lacking. He is also accomplished in black magic, thanks to which he can teleport himself or summon objects, fly generate a huge amount of electricity use telekinesis or metamorphose.

Bowser's physical size tends to vary from game to game. In most games, he towers over the majority of characters, but there are exceptions. In *Super Mario RPG*, he stands only slightly taller than Mario. He is shown changing his size at will or through others' sorcery in games including *Yoshi's Island*, *Super Mario Galaxy* and *Super Mario Galaxy 2*

Bowser aspires to take over the Mushroom Kingdom and merge it with his own realm. He is infatuated with Princess Peach,^{[11][12][13]} and routinely kidnaps her as part of his plans for domination.^[14] Sometimes, he kidnaps Peach simply to lure Mario into a trap, but occasionally he hopes to marry her

The character's role in the franchise varies. He is typically the main antagonist in the main series, but in the RPG series he sometimes works with the heroes to defeat a greater evil.^[15] The RPGs also portray Bowser in a more humorous light as a blustering, buffoonish bully with a hidden softer side. He also cares for his minions.

Bowser has a son, Bowser Jr., who helps his father kidnap Princess Peach. Bowser Jr.'s mother is unknown, as Bowser isn't officially confirmed as having a previous marriage yet. Originally in *Super Mario Bros. 3*, Bowser was stated to be the father of the Koopalings^[16] with subsequent official sources adding that he was their biological father,^{[17][18]} but since their return in *New Super Mario Bros. Wii* they have been referred to as *Bowser's minions*. In a 2012 interview, Shigeru Miyamoto stated that "*Our current story is that the seven Koopalings are not Bowser's children. Bowser's only child is Bowser Jr., and we do not know who the mother is.*"^[19]

Voice and portrayal

Up until the release of *Super Mario Sunshine* Bowser's voice consisted of mostly computer generated roars, snarls, and laughs. Then, in the 2002 release of *Super Mario Sunshine*, radio personality and voice actor Scott Burns gave Bowser his first spoken dialogue and continued portraying him for several more years. With the late 2005 release of *Super Mario Strikers*, Kenneth W. James became the new voice actor for Bowser. Although, for a few years, old recordings of Burns were reused for games after James took the role, such as *Mario Party DS*. Between Burns and James, Bowser was briefly voiced by Eric Newsome in *Super Paper Mario*. Computerized roars are still used for Bowser occasionally in such games as the *Super Smash Bros.* series.

Appearances

In video games

Super Mario series

Bowser's first appearance was in *Super Mario Bros.* as the main antagonist who kidnaps *Princess Peach* and as the *final boss* with several false versions of him appearing as lesser bosses. In addition to breathing fire, he also throws hammers in later levels, similar to the *Hammer Bros.* He reappears in *Super Mario Bros.: The Lost Levels*, in which he uses the same battle tactics as in the previous game. Although he was absent in *Super Mario Bros. 2* (where he was replaced by *Wart* as the final boss), he appears in *Super Mario Bros. 3*, and along with the *Koopalings*^[20] he transforms the kings of seven worlds into various different creatures and eventually capturing *Princess Peach* yet again. Bowser and his seven koopalings reappear in *Super Mario World*, where they conquer *Dinosaur Land* and kidnap *Peach* while she and *Mario* are on vacation on *Yoshi's Island*. He makes his first 3D appearance in *Super Mario 64*, where he takes over *Peach's* castle and steals 120 *Power Stars*^[21] (150 in *Super Mario 64 DS*), scattering them through various worlds linked using the castle. He returns in *Super Mario Sunshine*, in which his youngest, but favorite son, *Bowser Jr.*, who is disguised as an evil version of *Mario*, kidnaps *Peach*. Bowser himself eventually appears in the final boss battle of the game. In *New Super Mario Bros.*, Bowser is the boss of the first world, which features a battle similar to that of *Super Mario Bros.* After being defeated, he falls into lava and is reduced to a skeleton called *Dry Bowser*. He is eventually restored by *Bowser Jr.* and acts as the final world's boss along with his son. In *Super Mario Galaxy*, Bowser steals the *Power Stars* from *Rosalina's* *Comet Observatory* and kidnaps *Peach*, taking her to the center of the universe to recreate it, with the intention of taking over the universe. He also appears in *New Super Mario Bros. Wii* as the final boss and primary antagonist of the game. After being defeated at the end, he grows to a much greater size, chasing *Mario* through the castle by breathing fireballs before *Mario* defeats him again. Bowser appears in the sequel *Super Mario Galaxy 2*, once again as the main antagonist. Here, however, Bowser has grown to giant size, requiring the player to dodge more powerful attacks such as *meteors* and bolts of lightning. Bowser also appears in *Super Mario 3D Land* as the main antagonist once again where he steals *Peach* and uses the *Super Leaf* to create tailed minions. *Dry Bowser* also returns in this game as well. Bowser also appeared in *New Super Mario Bros. 2* along with his *Koopalings* in order to capture *Peach* once more. *Dry Bowser* also makes an appearance in this game. Bowser returns as the main antagonist of *New Super Mario Bros.* and *Luigi U* along with the *Koopalings* and his son, but this time, they invade *Castle Toadstool*. Bowser returns once again in *Super Mario 3D World* as the main antagonist who is fought thrice, including as the final boss in a form known as *Meowser*, and this time, he will take over the *Sprixie Kingdom* by kidnapping the seven *Sprixies* so that he may steal the kingdom's treasures. He appears once more in *Super Mario Odyssey* as the main antagonist, kidnapping *Peach* so he can marry her. He goes about various kingdoms, stealing items for his use at the wedding. He also enlisted the aid of a band of anthropomorphic rabbits named "The Broodals" as his wedding planners and also to stop *Mario* from thwarting Bowser's wedding plans. He serves as a boss midway through the game and also as the final boss. Once all *Power Moons* are obtained, an alternate final battle with Bowser can be unlocked.

Bowser appears as a child in various games. Known as **Baby Bowser** (not to be confused with *Bowser Jr.*), he antagonizes the *Baby Mario* brothers and various members of the *Yoshi* species. He first appears in *Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island* where *Kamek* predicts the brothers will become problems in the future, so he attempts to kidnap them. He appears yet again in the sequel *Yoshi's Story*, stealing the "Super Happy Tree" from a group of *Yoshis*. He appeared yet again in *Yoshi's Island DS* as a playable character to recover his castle. *Baby Bowser* and his older self also appeared in *Yoshi's New Island* as the final boss. *Baby Bowser* makes an appearance in *Yoshi's Woolly World* as the main antagonist. *Baby Bowser* also appears alongside adult Bowser in early installments of the *Mario Party* series, typically as a flunky for adult Bowser but also stealing coins from players on the game boards.

In *Super Mario Maker*, Bowser can now be placed in any non-castle level. Although he cannot throw hammers, a winged *Bowser Jr.* can be stacked on top of him for that purpose. A Bowser costume can also be unlocked for use in the *Super Mario Bros.* style.

Other games

- Bowser makes various appearances in the *Mario RPGs*.
 - In *Super Mario RPG* he uses *Mario* and the *Koopa Toop* to become an ally only to reclaim his castle which is stolen by the main antagonist *Smithy*
 - The *Paper Mario* series
 - In the first *Paper Mario* game, he is the primary antagonist, stealing an item called the *Star Rod* and using it to empower himself.
 - He is a lesser antagonist in *The Thousand-Year Door* and a minor playable character and is a major playable character in the sequel *Super Paper Mario*

- He also appeared in *Sticker Star* as the main antagonist where he invades the Sticker Fest ceremony and serves as the final boss with the 6th and final Royal Sticker. Unlike the other games, this is the first *Paper Mario* game he doesn't talk.
- He appears in *Color Splash* as the main antagonist. However, unusually, he is unintentionally evil in this game, having been corrupted by poisonous black paint he accidentally created, turning him into Black Bowser. Under its influence, Black Bowser plans to cover Prism Island, as well the Mushroom Kingdom in black paint.
- The Mario & Luigi series
 - He plays minor antagonistic and supporting roles in *Superstar Saga*, where he aids Mario and Luigi in battling the witch Cackletta. At one point in the story he loses his memory after a big clunk on the head and becomes **Rookie**, the assistant of master thief Popple. After regaining it, he gets possessed by Cackletta's spirit, becoming **Bowletta**.
 - In *Bowser's Minions* he reprises his role from the original *Superstar Saga*, only that this time his minions are fighting back against Fawful's forces to free their leader
 - Its prequel/sequel, *Partners in Time*, features both Bowser and Baby Bowser as minor antagonists (the major antagonists are an alien race called the Shroobs). Baby Bowser races against the Bros. to rebuild an artifact called the Cobalt Star, while Bowser, after failing to kidnap an impostor Peach, is enhanced by the elder Princess Shroob and becomes the final boss called **Shrowser**. Both Bowser and Baby Bowser also team up at one point to fight the Bros.
 - In *Bowser's Inside Story*, Bowser is the main protagonist and a playable character with Mario and Luigi supporting him from inside his body without his knowledge. Although he is one of the game's 3 protagonists, he is still fought twice in the game as a boss by the Mario Bros.
 - In *Dream Team*, he appeared as the main antagonist and major boss, being fought three times, including as the final boss where he becomes Dreamy Bowser. He forms an alliance with the initial antagonist Antasma, but later betrays Antasma (which he intended to do for a while).
 - *Paper Jam*, a crossover 3DS game, features both Bowser and his paper counterpart (Paper Bowser), similar to *Partners in Time* where Bowser and Baby Bowser meet each other who team up.
- In *Super Princess Peach*, he uses the power of the Vibe Scepter to capture Mario and Luigi (prompting Princess Peach herself to come to their rescue).
- He serves as the final boss in *Luigi's Mansion* in a battle on the roof of the titular mansion itself. Throughout the battle, it becomes apparent that this incarnation is King Boo inside a Bowser costume, which falls inert to the floor if Luigi is victorious.
- Bowser also appears as a playable character in the *Mario Kart* series and various *Mario* sports titles, such as *Mario Golf*, *Tennis* and all five *Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games* installments. Dry Bowser also appears in some of the sports games occasionally as a playable character being an independent character as opposed to being a form of Bowser.
- He also appears frequently in the *Mario Party* series as a non-playable character with a space that, if players land on it, causes him to appear and either steal Stars or coins or make the players play his minigames. He finally gets to be playable in *Mario Party 10*.
- Bowser is a selectable character within *Super Smash Bros. Melee*, *Brawl*, *3DS/Wii U*, and *Ultimate*. In these games is a form called **Giga Bowser**, a darker and more monstrous form with added power elements to his attacks. This form is an unplayable boss character in *Melee*, and is fought in Adventure Mode and the final Event Match (alongside Mewtwo and Ganondorf), while in *Brawl*, *3DS* and *Wii U*, it serves as a temporary playable transformation with the Final Smash. This monstrous form appears again as a boss in the Classic Mode *Ultimate*. In The Subspace Emissary from *Brawl*, Bowser is unplayable for most of the story and only becomes playable after King Dedede defeats him in a duel.
- In the Wii U version of *Bayonetta 1* and *2*, Bowser makes a cameo in which Bayonetta can summon his fists and feet when wearing the game's unlockable Princesses Peach and Daisy costumes.
- Bowser appears as one of the *Skylanders* in *Skylanders: SuperChargers* as a fire element SuperCharger along with Spitfire and the SuperCharger version of Eruptor. His signature vehicle is the Clown Cruiser. He is only available on the Wii, the Wii U, and the Nintendo 3DS along with *Donkey Kong*.
- Bowser also appears in the SNES version of *SimCity*; he is the one attacking the player's city during the monster attack disaster instead of the monster resembling Godzilla in the original PC release.
- In the 1996 game *Tetris Attack*, he is the final boss fought on Hard and the hidden Super Hard difficulties in both the SNES and GB versions.

In other media

- Bowser's first appearance in any *Mario* media outside the games was in the *Mario* anime film *Super Mario Bros.: Peach-Hime Kyushutsu Dai Sakusen!* in which he is voiced by Akiko Wada.
- Bowser appeared in all of the *Amada Anime Series: Super Mario Bros.* OVA films.

- Bowser's first American appearances were as the antagonist in all three *Super Mario Bros.* cartoons (produced by DIC Entertainment) voiced by Harvey Atkin. The character is typically referred to as "King Koopa" rather than Bowser. His appearance in the cartoons was also different than his video game appearances. He had green skin and lacked his red hair and ability to breathe fire, although he did wield a magic wand similar to those seen in *Super Mario Bros.* 3
- Bowser uses various alter egos in *The Super Mario Bros. Super Show!* to match some of the episodes' titles.
- In *The Adventures of Super Mario Bros. 3* Bowser was assisted by his Koopa Kids, who received different names in the show.
- In *Super Mario World*, Bowser and the Koopa Kids returned to fight Mario, Luigi, Yoshi, and Princess Peach in Dinosaur Land
- In 1989, Bowser, again referred to as "King Koopa", hosted a live action show entitled *King Koopa's Kool Kartoons*. On this half-hour program, Bowser gives away prizes to the children.
- Bowser appears as the antagonist in the *Mario* comics published as part of the *Nintendo Comics System*
- In the 1993 *Super Mario Bros.* movie, Bowser was played by Dennis Hopper. Here, he is President Koopa but is called "King Koopa," who usurped the throne of the parallel-universe city of Dinohattan. Rather than a turtle, Koopa is a humanoid evolved from dinosaurs. Koopa is defeated when Mario and Luigi devolve him first into a *Tyrannosaurus* and then into primordial slime. The film version of Bowser/Koopa was met with significant criticism, and was mentioned by Hopper as the worst role he has ever played.^[2]
- Bowser was played by Christopher Hewett in the 1989 *Ice Capades*.
- Bowser also appears in the CD-i game *Hotel Mario* as a final boss.
- Bowser appears in the Disney film *Wreck-It Ralph* as one of the video game villains that attend the villain support group Bad-Anon. When *Wreck-It Ralph* mentions his interest in not being a villain anymore, Bowser reacts to this by breathing fire similar to a spit take since he was drinking something at the time. Later near the end of the film, Ralph expresses his success of being a real hero and gaining some respect from Bowser and the other villains, who applaud him.
- Bowser appears in two sketches in two separate episodes of the *MAD* television series, voiced by Fred Tatasciore both times. In the first sketch, "Koopa Soup", he advertises a new kind of soup served in a Koopa shell. In the second sketch, "Franklin & Crash", he tries to stop Mario from rescuing Peach before the castle he is guarding is crushed, then agrees to go buy some soda with Mario afterwards.
- In late 2018, Bowsette, a fan-made powered-up version of Bowser using the Super Crown power-up from *New Super Mario Bros. U Deluxe* became very popular on the Internet.^[23]



The "Bad-Anon" villain meeting from *Wreck-It Ralph* features Bowser and other various well-known video game characters, including Clyde, Doctor Eggman, M. Bison, Neff, and Zangief

Reception and legacy

Due largely to the success of the *Mario* franchise, Bowser has become one of the most iconic and easily recognizable video game antagonists of all time. He frequently appears in lists for greatest video game antagonists. *IGN* placed him at #2 out of 100,^[24] and *GamePro* placed him at #9 out of 47.^[25] *GameSpot* listed him at #9 in their "Top 10 Video Game Villains" article, stating "Of all the villains to make an appearance on this list, Bowser...has got to be the most interesting," later adding "While some people say Bowser's life may have gotten into a rut, the man has simply refined his game down to an everyday thing. He's focused, he's dedicated, and worst of all, he's patient."^[26] Bowser ranked in the first slot on *GameDaily's* top 10 Nintendo characters that deserve their own games list, explaining if *Yoshi* and *Wario* get their own games, Bowser should too due to his being one of gaming's most nefarious villains.^[27] In *GameDaily's* top 10 *Smash Bros.* characters list, he ranked sixth.^[28] *GameDaily* also included him in their most persistent video game villains list.^[29] However, Bowser has been also rated as the 4th biggest douchebag in gaming history by *ScrewAttack*, who said that he wants to "take Mario down".^[30] *IGN* editor Craig Harris described Bowser as being a household name.^[31] In 2011, *Empire* ranked him as the 23rd greatest video game character^[32] while *Guinness World Records Gamer's Edition 2013* featured Bowser first in their list of top 50 villains.^[33]

Bowser's role in *Super Mario Galaxy* has been met with significant praise. *Eurogamer* editor Margaret Robertson commented that after years of being a "comedy villain", *Galaxy* put him back at his "scaly scabrous best".^[34] *PALGN* editor Chris Sell called him the best boss in *Mario Galaxy*, stating that it wasn't just because of the battles with him being "superb, screen filling affairs", but also because he is "back to being mean again".^[35] *Nintendo World Report* editor Aaron Kaluszka commented that battling Bowser has never been "this intense and engaging".^[36] *IGN* editor Cam Shea praised his physical appearance in *Super Mario Galaxy*, describing

him as "imposing and weighty".^[37] Another IGN editor, Matt Casamassina, praised the visual quality of the characters, citing Bowser in particular and mentioning how his "funky red fur waggles in the wind".^[38] Game Positive editor Travis Simmons concurred, commenting that his hair "gives him a touch of personality".^[39]

Bowser's role in *Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story* has been met with highly positive reception. He has frequently been referenced as the main character of the game due to his prominence in it. Eurogamer editor Christian Donlan commented that it felt good to play as Bowser, and that "After years of picking a path carefully around threats, jumping out of harm's way, and tackling challengers mostly from above, it's a pleasure to put those cares aside and relish a few hours of spiky, tortoise-shelled power."^[40] Destructoid editor Jim Sterling described Bowser's gameplay as "brilliant comic relief". He also described the dialogue of the game as being "laugh out loud funny", specifically praising Bowser's ego.^[41] RPGamer editor Michael Cunningham praised the game for Bowser "stealing the show", but also decried it for not having quite enough of him.^[42] Nintendo World Report editor Pedro Hernandez commented that the plot and humour of the game make iconic characters "more enduring, including Bowser".^[43] N-Gamer Magazine editor Matthew Castle commented that all *Mario* role-playing games make good use of Bowser, but that this is the first game where Bowser takes the center stage.^[44] Game Style editor Drew Middlemas commented that Bowser stole the show, being portrayed as a "creature of pure, blustering ego who reminds us of why he's one of gaming's greatest baddies."^[45] N-Europe editor called him the "real star" of the game, calling him a "fantastic character" with "so much more to give than what we've seen from him so far, even in the other Mario RPGs". He added that his "foul mood and lack of intelligence" as well as his interactions with other characters are well written.^[46]

Kombo editor commented that he became a more sympathetic character as the game progresses, adding that his "massive ego pushes him towards heroism".^[47] Wired.com editor Chris Kohler called Bowser awesome, adding that his segments are funnier than Mario and Luigi's.^[48] Giant Bomb editor Brad Shoemaker states that Bowser steals the show, commenting that playing as him gives players an inside glimpse of his ego and megalomania.^[49] IGN editor Craig Harris described Bowser as the only "core Nintendo character over the past couple decades" to not have a starring role in a video game, and this game acts as his "big break".^[50] 1UP.com editor Jeremy Parish stated that Bowser makes the game, describing him as more interesting than *Bowser's Inside Story* predecessor's partners, the baby forms of Mario and Luigi.^[51] GamePro editor Alicia Ashby called Bowser one of the most "lovable characters in the Nintendo universe", and praising *Bowser's Inside Story* for giving him "much deserved time in the spotlight".^[52] GameSpy editor Phil Theobald called him the breakout star of the game, stating that "the gruff, quick-to-anger pro/antagonist is a treat to watch as he continuously becomes infuriated with the incompetence of his minions".^[53] GamesRadar editor Henry Gilbert stated that he is "home to the most drastic change to the formula" in this game, stating that while he is still a "humorously incapable villain", the game allows players to switch between Bowser and the Mario Bros. at their discretion.^[54] ScrewAttack listed Bowser as the number one Top 10 Reptiles/Amphibians in Video Games.^[14] IGN names Bowser one of the "oldest villains in gaming history, not to mention one of the most iconic."^[55]

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